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Prairie Breezes

James W. Foley

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Prairie Breezes

By
James M. Foley



Boston: Richard G. Badger

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TO MY WIFE

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A Toast to Merriment

Make merry! Though the day be gray
Forget the clouds and let's be gay!

How short the days we linger here:

A birth, a breath, and then — the bier!
Make merry, you and I, for when
We part we may not meet again!

What tonic is there in a frown?

You may go up and I go down,

Or I go up and you — who knows

The way that either of us goes?

Make merry! Here's a laugh, for when
We part we may not meet again.

Make merry! What of frets and fears?

There is no happiness in tears.

You tremble at the cloud and lo!

'Tis gone — and so 'tis with our woe,
Full half of it but fancied ills.
Make merry! 'Tis the gloom that kills.

Make merry! There is sunshine yet.

The gloom that promised, let's forget.

The quip and jest are on the wing,

Why sorrow when we ought to sing?
Refill the cup of joy, for then
We part and may not meet again.

A smile, a jest, a joke — alas!

We come, we wonder, and we pass.

The shadows fall; so long we rest

In graves, where is no quip or jest.
Good day! Good cheer! Good-bye! For then
We part and may not meet again!

Why the Jury Disagreed

I am an honest man, I am; ez fair ez a man kin
be;
Fer anything that's on th' square, I'm willin' to
agree;
But when I'm right, no set o' men kin argify with
me.

I heerd th' witnesses myself an' I heerd th' law-
yers, too;
I heerd th' jedge's charge, 'y jing, that some of
'em slept right through,
An' that man, he wa'n't guilty, sir, no more 'n me
er you.

Now, what's th' use t' argify when y' know right
where ye 're at?
If my mind's made up, 'y jing, I'll stay, y' kin bet
yer Sunday hat;
When y' can't git nothin' in th' draw, my doctern
is, stand pat.

Ten of 'em stood for th' feller's guilt on th' fust
vote, instantly;
One of 'em voted his ballot blank an' th' other one
was me,
An' of all th' stubborn, senseless mules, I swan I
never see!

I 'low I know what's evidence an' I got some
slight idee
Of law myself, though I don't perfess to be no
LL.D.
But th' ain't no 'leven men on airth kin bulldoze
Silas Lee.

They argified an' argified, with now an' then a
swear;
I set an' listened to 'em talk an' never turned a
hair,
Fer when I tired o' hearin' 'em, I jes' played soli-
taire.

Thank Heaven I ain't no stubborn fool; I got
some common sense;
I take my law fr'm th' jedge, 'y jing, an' I sift
th' evidence;
But when it comes to my idees, wal, I ain't on th'
fence.

They all got middlin' temperish when th' court-
house clock struck nine;
But nary a one of 'em guv in, clear down th' stub-
born line;
They jes' adhered to their idees an' I adhered t'
mine.

John Scruggs, he 'lowed t' calcalate the jury orto
rise;
He had some chores t' do at hum an' he said he'd
compermise;
An' I said I'd stay till they let him off — er th'
stars fell fr'm th' skies.

'Twas 'long 'bout midnight time, I guess; I'd beat
my sixteenth game
O' solitaire, an' th' light burned dim with a sickly
sort o' flame,
When Jason Benson up an' 'lowed how I was all
t' blame!

I riz right up fr'm off my cheer an' fetched him
one so free
That I 'low y' couldn't count th' stars that Jason
Benson see;
An' Jason's cousin (through his first wife) he tuk
a smash at me!

We mixed it purty middlin' warm; Wash Jen-
kins, he struck out
At Jason's cousin (through his first wife) an'
fetched him sech a clout
That his nose was flatter 'n griddle-cakes, an' th'
blood jes' spurted out.

Hamp Hawkins slid down underneath th' table—
Hamp was slim —
But someone guv th' lamp a shove an' overturned
th' glim.
Hamp's clothes tuk fire fr'm th' kerosene an' durn
nigh finished *him*.

Win Watson mounted of a cheer an' jes' begin t'
shout
“Peace! Peace!” when Jason Benson he fetched
him a rousin' clout
That laid Win len'thwise on th' floor, knocked
plumb, completely out!

Then Scruggs he laid a-holt o' me, an' Jason
grabbed my throat,
Both holdin' on so cussed tight I couldn't peel my
coat,
An' Jason's cousin (through his first wife), he
says: “Let's take a vote!”

Then all of 'em voted fer his guilt — every las'
 one but me ;
They never had no notion 't all of tryin' to agree,
So I went back t' solitaire, fer y' can't bluff Silas
 Lee.

Now that's th' livin', gospel truth, fer any man
 t' read,
It ain't fixed up t' favor me, an' it ain't no lyin'
 screed ;
Ez fur ez I'm consarned, 'y jing, th' jury *was*
 agreed !

A Midwinter Pastoral

The frost gleams thick on the window pane,
The cart wheels creak down the frozen lane ;
High from the chimneys, everywhere
Rise threads of smoke to the biting air ;
The barn door creaks with a plaintive twinge,
Where the glistening frost tints the rusted hinge.

The old pump cries — a shivering cry ;
While “ Crunch ! Crunch ! Crunch ! ” tramp the
 horses by.

The chore boy shivers as he stands
And beats his sides with his mittened hands ;
While the ice forms thick on the old pump spout,
As the glistening water gushes out.

There's hoarfrost deep on the great ox yoke,
And the breath of the oxen comes like smoke ;
The clothes hang stiff on the swaying line,
And the house dog stands with a piteous whine
At the closed storm door ; and the milk cows wait
With huddled bulks at the barnyard gate.

The prying youngster, unafraid,
Dares tip his tongue to the frosted blade
Of the axe that lies at the chopping-block;
The erstwhile strut of the barnyard cock
Is only a stiff and stilted round
As he picks his toes from the frozen ground.

There's snow inch-deep where the cows once
browsed,
There's frost nail-thick on the beasts unhoused.
The chore boy stamps in the drifted snows
To coax the warmth to his tingling toes,
As he drives his fork in the sodden hay,
And the day is gray in a gloomy way.

There's a "Crunch!" and "Crunch!" as foot-
steps stalk
Down the sounding length of the pine board
walk.
The well wheel squeaks with a frosty note
And the well rope's stiff with an icy coat;
The gathered oxen drink their fill
With updrawn backs, and a shiver chill.

The shed door creaks with a shivering sound,
As the soapsuds splash on the frozen ground
Where a pail from the half-bared arms is swung
Of the kitchen maid, who gives quick tongue
In a treble "B-r-r-r-h-h!" and a grateful change
Soon finds at the glow of the kitchen range.

The chore boy beds his beasts, and then
Shoos back to its perch a vagrant hen;
The sodden snow from his feet he knocks
Ere he piles the depths of the great wood-box
With snowy sticks; and when 'tis laid
He steals a kiss from the kitchen maid.

The fields are white and the earth is dead;
The frost snaps time to the chore boy's tread,
Stands thick, like snow, on the window pane,
And the cart wheels creak down the frozen lane.
While rise from the chimneys everywhere
Thin threads of smoke on the frosty air.

A Verse to Memory

Now Memory, like a little child,
Takes me by one soft hand.
By dreams of keen delight beguiled
We stray through Flowerland;
And like the child, sweet Memory
By many a byway strays,
Plucks flowers and bears them back to me
To fashion my bouquets.

By many sweet, secluded ways
She wanders, far or near;
A rose upon my garland lays
Bejeweled with a tear:
The rose of some far-flown ideal,
A fragrance, ah, how rare!
My fingers close but to reveal
The ashes crumbling there.

Now tinkling laughter ripples clear
As some new flower she spies,
Some far-forgotten joys appear
As fairy faces rise.
My thoughts in revel, flower-wreathed,
Heart-full, my garlands lie,
While on the scented air is breathed
A greeting and good-bye.

Come, Child, away! The frolic ends,
The flower in ashes, dead;
The perfume with the air that blends
We'll bear away instead.
Here at the hedge we kiss and part,
Some sterner duties find.
Bear all the sweetness in the heart
But leave the flowers behind.

Thank God, thank God for Memory,
Half smile and half a tear;
The flowers are there eternally,
And when the days are drear,
In through the tangled hedge of days
We wander, hand in hand,
And I may dream, while Memory strays,
A child in Flowerland.

A Christmas Greeting

"Merry Christmas!" Wishin' it
Earnest; ain't no hypocrite.
Got no sort o' axe to grind,
Jes' feel sort o' so inclined.
Heart so full o' happiness
Wish 'et I c'd call an' bless
Everyone, an' so I say:
"Merry Christmas! Bless th' day!"

"Merry Christmas!" Sayin' it
Honest like, an' heart t' fit.
Wishin' everyone c'd share
Happiness, an' some t' spare.

Turkey smokin' hot an' brown,
Old an' young folks settin' 'roun',
Holly twined with mistletoe,
"Merry Christmas!" Jes' feel so!

"Merry Christmas!" Frosty air
Echoin' it everywhere.
"Merry Christmas!" That's what tells
In th' chime o' th' church bells.
"Merry Christmas!" Prose er rhyme
Can't do justice to th' time.
Can't find language t' express
What it holds o' happiness.

"Merry Christmas!" Want t' pray
F'r 'em all jes' thataway.
Ain't no highfalutin' prayer
As I know of can compare
With that simple wish o' mine:
"Merry Christmas!" — snow er shine,
Heart beats happy either way,
"Merry Christmas!" Bless th' day.

"Merry Christmas!" Me an' you
An' th' whole world, through an' through.
Ain't no language can express
What it means o' happiness.
"Merry Christmas!" Prose er rhyme
Can't do justice to th' time.
Jes' ain't nothin' else t' say:
"Merry Christmas! Bless th' day!"

Some Pointers from Grum

“ Now I vum,”
Said old Grum,
“ Y’ sh’d keep gals t’ hum
Till they’re twenty er thirty
Ez tight ez a drum.

Y’ sh’d l’arn
’Em t’ ’arn
What they git an’ consarn
Themselves with the’r chores,
That’s my doctern, by darn!

An’ th’ boys
Y’ sh’d lick
Every day with a stick,
Till they come when y’ call ’em
An’ come mighty quick!

Y’ sh’d teach
’Em that speech
Is f’r grown folks an’ sich;
We got youngsters t’ work,
We got preachers t’ preach.

An’ this dum
Go an’ come
Is all nonsense, I vum.
In all my born days
Ain’t been five mile fr’m hum.

Oh, I got
Some idees
How t’ raise familiees,
How I’m goin’ t’ raise mine;
You can do as y’ please.

An' f'r clo'es,
Do y' s'pose
That my spondulix goes
F'r Paris creations
An' gowns an' silk hose?

Why, say!
This old plum
Colored suit here, I vum,
I was married in that
An' it's good now, by gum!

Oh, I got
Some idees
How t' raise familiees.
I was raised thataway
An' by gum look at me!"

Just How It Was

"Now, just let me see:
Seems to me that 'twas she
Objected to something
That he did. Or he
Objected to her having
Someone to tea.
No! Now isn't that queer?
I know I did hear
Just the way that it was,
But it's left me, I fear.

"No! It comes to me now:
It seems this was the how
Of it: Something he did
That she wouldn't allow.

Or was it her old folks
That started the row?
No! Now that isn't right,
I know that's not quite
The way that Miss Gadaround
Told me last night.

"Ah! Now I recall
The gossip and all:
It seems that one night
When he went there to call —
'Twas last Spring, I think,
Or was it this Fall?
Oh, well, anyway
What I started to say
Was that — she — well,
My memory's awful today!

"Now, how did she tell
Me that? Well, well! Well! Well!!
You know she got her story
Right straight from Nell.
But I can't quite recall now
Just what she did tell
Me last night. Anyway,
Whichever it may
Be, the wedding is off,
As I started to say!"

Forsaken

High in the tree is an empty nest
Whence the fledgelings of yesterday are flown;
Hovers a bird in a vague unrest,
Wondering, it may be, and all alone.

Wondering, it may be, or East or West
Or South or North swept the wings untried,
Wondering over an empty nest
And the blue of the infinite sky, so wide.

High in the attic 's a trundle bed
Whence the child of a Yesterday is flown;
Hovers a woman, with tears unshed,
Wondering, it may be, and all alone.

Wondering, it may be, or East or West
Or South or North roams the youth untried,
Wondering over an empty nest,
And an empty heart; — and the world so wide!

On Modern Music

She 's been to masters French and Greek, Italian
and Dutch,
She 's put in years on technique and she 's put in
years on touch,
She 's long on Dago music, she knows all the
rhapsodies,
She 's got a pile o' nocturnes like a haystack, if
y' please;
She simply dotes on Vogner; he 's the daddy of
'em all,

To hear her rave about him when th' women
come t' call.
But with all her fuss an' notions, sir, I wouldn't
give a prune
T' hear her play — she don't know how t' play
one goldurned tune!

She sits down at th' bench an' draws a mighty,
innard breath,
Then slams both hands down this way — like t'
scare a man t' death!
That's the prelude, so she tells me; then it's too-
dle-oodle-oo,
Tweedle, tweedle, toodle, toodle, rattle, tittle,
tattle, too!
Then she climbs up in the treble and she teeters
on th' keys,
Like a bird upon a limb when heavy winds is in
th' trees!
Down she slides into the bass part an' she ham-
mers it like sin,
While I sit there waitin', waitin' f'r th' music t'
begin.

Purty soon she strikes up somethin' like an old,
familiar air,
Sort o' sweet an' full o' comfort, an' I tilt back
in my chair,
Feelin' glad th' noise is over an' th' music has
begun,
But she only plays a note or two an' then th'
music 's done.
Bang! She strikes a bunch o' discords an' she
races down th' course,
One hand a-follerin' t'other like an old, string-
halted horse;

An' she murmurs: "Daddy, Daddy, ain't that
harmony jist grand?
Oh, Daddy, how it thrills you if you only under-
stand!"

Now I got my own opinion of what music orto
be,
An' it ain't no bunch o' fingers teeterin' on a sin-
gle key.
It's got some order to it, an' y' hear it in y'r ears
F'r days an' months, an' sometimes, if it's extry
sweet, f'r years!
Y' kin gi' me Annie Laurie, played th' good, ol'-
fashioned way —
Without no frills or furbelows — jes' sit down
there an' play,
An' I don't ask nothin' sweeter; f'r me it's twict
as grand
As any furrin rhapsody I never understand!

Golden Days in Slowville

These are golden days in Slowville; there is glad-
ness up and down;
For they 're sticking circus posters 'round the
little country town.
Flaming sheets of red and yellow on its every
barn and fence
Tell of wonders aggregated disregardful of ex-
pense.
Tell of wildernesses threaded for the fierce Big-
rigmajig;
Tell of jungle-beasts made captive and of marvels
small and big,
"In a most stupendous spectacle of splendor and
renown,"

Say the flaming circus posters in the little country town.

They have wielded monster brushes from the dewy hours of morn,
They have covered half of Jones's barn with grandeur heaven-born;
They have pictured fluffy ladies on the backs of dashing steeds,
They have ornamented Slowville with a wealth of daring deeds;
They have left a Ripperumptus on the back of Robbin's fence,
Captured in the wilds of Africa at marvelous expense;
They've a retinue of big-eyed lads as they move up and down
When they put up circus posters in the little country town.

Oh! the multicolored marvels done in wonderrous haste
With a broad red barn for background and no means but brush and paste.
"Hi, there, Jimmy! See the monkeys!" All the air is shrill with cries
As the myriads of wild beasts are upreared in gorgeous dyes;
There's the fierce Ornithorinktus and the dreadful Whatisnot,
The blood-sweating Crinklawoozum and the awful Bingleswat.
Tent and sideshow, flag and streamer, elephant, parade, and clown —
Oh! they're sticking circus posters 'round the little country town.

These are sleepless nights in Slowville; sleepless
nights and anxious days;
There's a hoarding of stray pennies got in half
a hundred ways;
There are lads in wonder raptured; open-
mouthed with bulging eyes,
Where the marvelous menageries from gorgeous
posters rise;
Oh! there's glory, glory, glory in the chariots
arrayed,
There's rapture in the promise of the splendid
parade;
And new life has come to Slowville and is surg-
ing up and down
Since they put up circus posters in the little
country town.

Ballad of the Rain

Puddles and pools in the village street,
Dripping eaves, where the swallows hide;
The splash and splash of horses' feet
Down the muddy lane, and the trees beside,
Sodden and soaked till the raindrops fall,
Like tears, and the twigs with jewels set
Of limpid water, and over all
A haze of mist, like a cloak all wet.

Under the boughs of the great oak tree
The glistening bulks of the huddled kine,
Driven from the pasture and rhythmically
Munching their cuds, and their broad backs
shine,
Drenched and matted with pelting rain.
Plaintively sounding a lowing wail;

A passing team in the muddy lane
And a muffled and melancholy hail.

Blinding sheets of the driven rain ;
Mist over hollow and plain and hill ;
Splashing drops on the misted pane
That trickle down to the window sill ;
Beaten fowls, with their ruffled crests,
Crowding close to the sheltering wall ;
Dripping orchards and sodden nests,
With mist like a wet cloak over all.

The herdsman lowers his broad hat brim
To a sheltering slant, and the raindrops fall
From the beaded edge of the lowered rim
To the oilskin coat that envelopes all
His length ; the guiding collie stops
From gathering in the grazing flocks
To shake from his sides the glistening drops
That mat the mass of his silken locks.

The eave spout gushes its frothy streams,
Whence the rain barrel fills and overflows
Its sides, and the slate roof blacker gleams
Through the murk and mist ; the housewife
goes
From room to room, lest the windows be
Unshut, and peers through the sodden pall
Without, and the rain beats endlessly,
With mist like a wet cloak over all.

Sullen and sodden and soaked and splashed
With pelting drops lies the distant field ;
The roads lie heavy, and wet steeds, dashed
With mud, where a carriage, muddy-wheeled,

Rolls down the road, and the drear day long
The weeping clouds no comfort hold.
The pelting rain dins a sullen song
And the day is gloomy, gray, and cold.

Old Friends

10 A. M.

“ Well! Well! Good mornin’! Howdy do!
I never dreamed o’ seein’ you.
Jes’ come back, huh? Been away
Since ’way las’ June — or was it May?
Glad to see you? Well, I swan
I missed ye since y’ hev been gone!
Huh? Well, I don’ min’ if I do.
I don’ care, seein’ how it’s you.

10.15 O’CLOCK

“ Well! Well! It does me good t’ see
Y’ back again! Hev one with me.
Yep. Fillemup again, ol’ fel’.
Goin’ t’ stay, too? Well, well, well!
I’m glad t’ hear it. Make a strike?
Ten thousand, huh? That’s somethin’ like!
Le’s see — how long y’ been away?
Since ’way las’ June — or was it May?

10.30 O’CLOCK

“ Le’s see — how long y’ been away?
Since ’way las’ June — or was it May?
Well, shay, ol’ chap, come up to tea
Tomorrow mornin’; you an’ me,

We're glad to shee each ozzer — hey?
I'm glad t' hear ye're goin' t' shtay,
Le's see — how longsh y' been away?
Was it nex' June or 'way las' May?

II O'CLOCK

"Come on, le's have annuzzer. Shay,
How longsh shay y' been away?
Le's see — how longsh y' been away?
Or las' June? An' ye're goin' t' shtay?
Shay! Le's go home. M' wife, she'll be
Awful gladsh shee you an' me.
"Le's see — how long y' been away?
Since 'way nex' June — or wash't May?

NOON

"Si' down, si' down! Shay! Did y' shay
How longsh wash y' been away?
Wash't nex' June or wash't May?
We're glad t' shee each ozzer — hey?
Shay! Never min', now! Thash all right,
We'll have breakfas' togezzer t'night,
An' supper t'morrer mornin'. Shay!
How longsh shay y' been away?"

The Leper and the Bell

And as the leper with the bell,
So some men through their lives must bear
Faces that serve the world as well
To tell the unclean hiding there.
And though the leper, shunned, conceals
His bell, and quiets its shrill stroke,
Some quick, unthinking step reveals
Its jingling presence, 'neath his cloak.

A Child's Almanac

My Mamma says 'at w'en it rains
'Ey're washin' Heaven's window-panes
An' careless angels 'ist do fill
'Eir pails too full an' 'atway spill
Some water down on us. 'At's w'y
It rains some days w'en maybe I
Would like to play. An' 'en she says
It's 'ist 'em angels' carelessness
'At makes 'em raindrops fall 'at way
At picnics an' on circus day.

My Mamma says 'at w'en it snows
'Ey're angels pickin' geese, she knows,
An' 'stead o' usin' 'em t' stuff
'Eir pillow cases, 'ey 'ist puff
An' blow an' don't clear up 'eir muss
Till all 'em feathers fall on us.
An' she says 'ey 'ist pick 'atway
'Cuz 'ey want geese f'r Tris'mus day,
An' 'at's w'y 'ere's 'e mostes' snow
Right close t' Tris'mus time, you know.

My Mamma says w'en wind ist roars
An' blows, 'at's w'en 'e angels snores,
But w'en it lightnings, she says, w'y,
'Ey're scratchin' matches on 'e sky.
An' w'en it rumbles 'bove our heads
'Ey're movin' furniture an' beds
Up 'ere, an' cleanin' house an' shakes
'Eir moth balls out an' 'at's w'at makes
It hail. An' weather, she 'ist 'clares
Is 'ist w'at angels does upstairs.

Yesterday

The light that's lost, no eye shall find ;
No hand shall stay the joys that wind
Through the long corridors of Time,
Or lure with lute or tempt with rhyme.
No cry, no prayer, no agony
Shall stay the tread of Time for thee,
Or call from dust and doom away
The flown delights of Yesterday.

In a Little While

'Tis only for a little while,
This life, a mingled sob and smile ;
The heart that throbs so warm today
Tomorrow ebbs its life away.
A moment hums life's busy loom,
Then hushed and silent in the tomb ;
And wields the sceptre, sob or smile,
For such a little, little while.

Youth rears in hope a castled pile
To rise for such a little while ;
Fate lays in dust its tow'ring walls,
Ambitious spires and gilded halls ;
Pride's swelling crest, now plumèd high,
Now stricken low, prays God to die ;
Time leads the saddened heart to smile
In such a little, little while.

Life's little candle feebly glows,
Life's little current quickly flows,
A moment heaves the troubled breath,
The candle finds its socket, Death.

The flushing cheek, the radiant eye,
Dim, lustreless, and cold shall lie,
And yet those pallid lips shall smile
With God in such a little while.

A Mistaken Impression

She was kissing a picture — I saw her, I saw her,
She sat at her desk and the door was flung
wide!

She was kissing a picture — Oh, horror! Oh,
horror!

Oh, Woman, must faithlessness with thee
abide?

She was kissing a picture, I know it, I know it!
The love light upon it glanced bright from her
eyes!

Oh, Traitor, I'll face thee! Thou'lt show it!
Thou'lt show it!

Aye, 'front her I will with the deed! Then she
dies!

She was kissing a picture! She hides it! She
hides it!

Down deep in a drawer and she's turning a key.
Now death and destruction betides it, betides it!
And woe whom it pictures when he shall face
me!

She was kissing a picture! She's going! She's
going!

I'll bide till she's gone and I'll steal it away!
Oh, jealousy's fury that's glowing, that's glowing
Within me! Oh, doom that has found me this
day!

She was kissing a picture! I'll take it, I'll take it
And flash in her face this damned image she
loves!

The desk! It is locked! Well, I'll break it, I'll
break it

And find me this card that her faithlessness
proves!

She was kissing a picture! I've found it, I've
found it!

(Be quiet my heart and be silent this moan!)
With letters and flowers around it, around it!
Why! What!! Well, I'm jiggered!!! The
picture's my own!

A Reminiscence of the Lone Pine Trail

Dead o' th' night an' th' moon rose pale
As th' face o' th' man we led along,
Over the hills th' long-drawn wail
Of a coyote-cry, like a funeral song.

Never a man of us spoke a word
As we tramped th' trail t' th' Lone Pine tree,
But a wind rose out o' th' dark an' stirred
Th' grass o' th' prairies mournfully.

Mile an' a half fr'm th' ol' log jail
T' th' Lone Pine tree at th' Devils Bend,
But a man don't speed on his final trail,
With a tree an' a rope at th' other end.

Two in front as we lef' th' jail,
Two behind an' two at th' side;
Then forward march f'r th' Lone Pine trail
Th' last this side o' th' Great Divide.

He walks along an' he knows th' plan,
An' seems resigned as a man can be;
F'r a life's a life, an' a man's a man.
A rope's a rope an' a tree's a tree.

Give him a plenty o' time t' walk,
Don' hurry a man on his final track;
Plenty o' room if he wants t' talk, —
F'r he stays thar when th' rest come back.

Stan' back, an' give him a chance t' pray,
He needs God's help in th' by an' by;
F'r a man will sin an' a man mus' pay,
But a man can't do no more'n die.

Grit yer teeth f'r th' struggle, Pard,
We'll make it quick as it can be made.
Down, down on th' other end thar! *Hard!*
A man has sinned an' a man has paid!

Th' hills are grim an' th' mornin's gray,
Thar's somethin' thar 'twixt th' sod an' sky.
A man will sin an' a man mus' pay,
But a man can't do no more'n die!

Family Resemblances

"He sort o' favors the Sykeses,"
Says Ma, lookin' closely at me,
An' she looks up at Pa as if layin' th' law
An' a-waitin' fer him to agree.
(The Sykeses, you know, was Ma's people.)
"Jes' see that small mouth an' small chin,
I don't want to brag but he's jes' his Aunt Mag
I tell ye, right over agin."

"Walks jes' like his Uncle Cornelius!"
(*"He couldn't walk straight if he tried,
An' I had him to bail 'leven times out o' jail,"
Says Pa, in a sorter aside.*)
"Swings along jes' like him," Ma says, smilin'.
(*"He orter have swung!" Pa mos' chokes,
Fer it always makes him jes' a-bilin'
When Ma claims I favor her folks.*)

"Got the reg'lar Sykes disposition."
(*"An' a devil's own temper it is,"
Says Pa down beneath his breath, grittin' his
teeth,
And his dander beginnin' to sizz.*)
"An' his hair, well, it's jes' like Aunt Sary's,
Thet married Lige Jenks from the Mills,
An' his nose is the picter o' Mary's,
An' his brow is th' image o' Will's."

"An' his voice, he gits that from th' Joneses,
They're cousins, you know, down in Kent;
An' I guess it mus' be from his Aunt Cicely
That he's gittin' his musical bent!"
An' Pa, well, he gits mad as thunder
An' swears like a pirate at sea,
An' says: "Thank the Lord that he's gittin' his
board
And his clothes and his lodgin' from me!"

The Bereavement

We're all alone, 'ist Pop an' me,
'Cuz Mamma's gone away somew'eres
T' stay th' longest time; an' we
Are all alone; an' Pop 'ist stares
A-past me an' he never hears
Me when I ast w'ere she could be,
An' both his eyes are full o' tears
W'en we're alone, 'ist Pop an' me.

An' after w'ile I ast him w'y
She don't come back; but he don't know;
An' 'en some way he starts t' cry
Till I say, "Please, Pop, don't cry so."
An' put my arms part way around
His neck an' hug him, 'ist 'cuz we
Are lonesome; he don't make a sound;
An' we're alone, 'ist Pop an' me.

An' he 'ist hugs me up so tight
An' sez my Mamma's gone so fur
She won't come back, but sez we might
'Ist some day, maybe, go to her.
An' I ast w'y can't we go now
'Cuz we're so lonesome here; but he
Don't seem to hear me ast, somehow,
An' we're alone, 'ist Pop an' me.

An' 'en I 'ist fergit she's gone
An' think it's almos' time fur her
T' come an' put th' supper on,
But w'en Pop's eyes are all a blur
I 'member 'at's she's gone away
An' can't git supper; Pop sez he
Ain't hungry, an' I ain't, I say;
An' we're alone, 'ist Pop an' me.

An' 'en Pop rocks me in his lap
An' rubs my head, 'ist soft an' kind,
An' asts me if I'll take a nap
If he pulls down th' parlor blind.
An' in a little w'ile I fall
Asleep an' he 'ist rocks; but he
Don't never go t' sleep at all,
An' we're alone, 'ist Pop an' me.

A Genealogical Family

You may believe 'tis true that your coursing
blood is blue,
But science stern assures us that all healthy
blood is red;
And the longest pedigree that grows on a family
tree
Isn't half as beneficial as a good, long head.

You may refer with pride to your ancestors, be-
side
Whose fame your light is dim, for letters, art,
or pelf,
But I trust you will believe it is nobler to achieve
Enough that you may be some time an ancestor
yourself.

The watch dog well who serves and who care-
fully observes
The strangers who approach and wakes the
family with his bark,
Tho' he had no pedigree is a better dog for me
Than the dog that sleeps, e'en tho' his ancestors
were in the Ark.

It is right that you admire, and admiring, you
aspire
To trace a noble pathway in your genealogy,
But permit me to assure that no person, rich or
poor,
Ever plucked a plum of greatness off the
grandest family tree.

The man who is a king, duke, or lord, or anything
That's noble, tho' his ancestors were cobblers
at the last,
Has a much more honored way in this little world
today
Than the cobbler whose ancestors governed
kingdoms in the past.

And full many a man today, to whom honor we
might pay,
Has been overcome in living up to a proud an-
cestry;
And full many a man been laid in an everlasting
shade
By the branches of a towering, spreading, an-
cient family tree.

So don't take it much to heart when a man takes
you apart
And tells you he was bred 'mid aristocracy's
environs;
Tho' his ancestors came o'er in the Mayflower to
this shore,
The log book, still, may show that every one
came o'er in irons.

If He Only Had a Mind

You've seen him — 'course you have — the man
 who might have been so great,
If he'd had the inclination and could only struck
 his gait;
Who's afeard to work in summer when the tem-
 per'ture is riz,
And who can't work in the winter, 'cause he's got
 the rheumatiz;
Who goes through life complainin', 'cause the
 good things pass him by,
An' a-tellin' what he could do, if he'd only half
 way try;
The man that in the race of life is joggin' 'way
 behind,
But who might 'a' led the winners, if he'd only
 had a mind.

When I hear a feller tellin' 'bout the great things
 he could do,
If he felt like, allus makes me think of our old
 Bobby Blue;
A great, big, strappin' feller, but at workin' he
 was slack,
'Cause he had a sunstroke once and was afeard
 he'd bring it back.
But Lor! I guess there's nothin' that was ever
 yet to do,
But Bobby could 'a' done it, if he'd really wanted
 to.
You'd have to scour the universe with fine toothed
 combs to find
A man to beat him workin' — if he'd only had a
 mind.

I've seen him sittin' evenin's on an old three-
legged chair,
His pants all rags and patches and with both his
elbows bare,
A-scrapin' an old fiddle till he'd allus weary us,
Screw up the pegs, an' cross his legs, an' look
mysterious.
Then, winkin' confidential like, he'd say: "Don't
say a word,
But I got the greatest idee that you ever seen or
heard.
It's for a patent right; you boys jest keep still
and you'll find
I kin make it worth a million — if I only got a
mind."

Again I've seen him sittin', with the people passin'
by,
A-chewin' cheap tobacco and a-spittin' at a fly;
And he'd point out the rich merchant that he
might 'a' had as clerk,
And the house he might 'a' lived in, if he'd had a
mind to work;
And the girls he might 'a' married, if he'd had a
mind to try;
And the teams he might 'a' driven, that went
swif'ly steppin' by;
And the gems he might 'a' sparkled, and the way
he might 'a' shined,
With an independent fortune — if he'd only had
a mind.

One night we went together to th' op'ry-house
to hear
A way-up concert company that was goin' to ap-
pear.

They had the finest fiddler there that ever tuned
a string,
An' the noises that he imitated jest beat every-
thing.
At first he had us laughin', an' next time he made
us cry,
An' he played bird songs so life-like you could
almost see 'em fly;
An' Bobby sit and yawned and blinked, and fi-
nally opined
He could beat him all to thunder — if he only had
a mind.

Th' last time I saw Bobby he was purty nigh the
end,
A-suff'rin' from the fever an' he didn't seem to
mend.
The doctor gave him pills and things, but didn't
do no good.
He said he'd never get well and old Bobby swore
he would.
Doc was a-feelin' of his pulse — 'twas beatin'
mighty slow,
Says he: "It's only forty, and that's runnin'
mighty low."
An' Bobby says, says he: "It may be runnin'
'way behind,
But I could run her up to ninety — if I only had
a mind."

I can see him standin', peerin' at the gates of
Paradise,
With a sort o' leerin', sneerin'-like expression in
his eyes.
I can see him sizin' up the gate, an' then I see
him feel
The gold an' pearly trimmin's and a-wonderin'
if they're real;

I can see him steppin' through an' takin' in the
sights inside ;
I can hear him tellin' Peter what *he* could do if
he tried ;
An' his drawlin' voice a-sayin' that, while things
was mighty fine,
He could build a blame sight better — if he only
had a mind.

Poor Jim

In a New England commonwealth, while knock-
ing 'round for strength and health,
I boarded with a widow dame (of course I can't
disclose her name),
An acid creature, gaunt and grim, who lived
alone with one son, Jim.
A freckled, awkward, red-haired chap, not reared
exactly in the lap
Of luxury, or taught to know affection's honeyed
overflow.
And oft my rose-hued fancy's dreams were rudely
shattered by the screams
Wild from the wood-shed forth which came. And
then my stern, ascetic dame,
Smoothing the wrinkles from her lap and waving
high a leathern strap,
Emerged, and said in accents grim: "Feel better
now, I've paddled Jim."

Day in, day out, that same assault, whate'er the
wrong or whose the fault.
If any boarder sought by night to liquidate his
debt in flight,
My acid widow from her grief in flogging Jim
found swift relief.

Whene'er in anger, 'twas her wont to strap that
awkward little runt.

The beef was tough, the bread was burned — at
once my lady quickly turned,

Until she spied the trembling Jim; her claw-like
fingers gobbled him,

Swift to the wood-shed bore him out, aloft she
swung her leathern knout,

And then emerged, tall, sour, and grim: "Feel
better now, I've paddled Jim."

Poor Jim, a child of sores and salve, served as a
constant safety valve.

Perhaps my lady angered came from quarrel with
some neighbor dame;

Or worsted in some church debate; arose, per-
chance, a little late;

The butcher's bill was deemed too large; the gro-
cer's trifling overcharge

Conspired to rouse my lady's ire; her lips were
drawn, her eyes flashed fire;

Straightway the luckless Jim was sought, the
strap from out the kitchen brought,

Jim laid across his mother's lap; shrill whistled
then the leathern strap.

Until she breathed in accents grim: "Feel bet-
ter now, I've paddled Jim."

But once my lady's accents shrill were silenced;
she was stricken ill.

Her lungs distressed, she strove for breath, and
hovered between life and death.

The doctors pondered in dismay; they held no
hope and saw no way

To save my lady's life. More grim and gaunt
she grew, and little Jim

Was called to say his last good-bye. She spied
him with a brighter eye,

Swift seized him, drew him 'cross her lap, and
called the nurse to bring the strap.
At eve the doctor, calling 'round, miraculous im-
provement found.
"I feel," she whispered low to him, "much bet-
ter since I paddled Jim."

Poet and Peasant

He was a simple countryman, a genial soul and
kind.
The evening was poetic, and to imagery inclined,
I gazed out o'er the stream and field. "How
musical the leaves!"
I cried. "What web of melody their subtle rus-
tling weaves!
The crystal waters murmur down the banks of
moss and fern,
Adown the vale the sombre wail of lingering
loon or hern.
Shrill, shrill the cry of night birds high, forth-
floating in the air,
And fairy footfalls trip and tinkle where the fleece
floats there,
In boundless billows of the unflecked, azure sea
of blue.
I listen. Aye, I hear them, nearly! Nay, and
do not you?"
"I b'lieve I do hear suthin'," he replied, "down
in the bogs;
An' mebbe it is fairies, but mos' likely it is hogs."

“ See! See! ” I cried. “ The streaming splendor
 streaking o’er the sky,
Where chariots of cloud on starry wheels are
 rolling by.
See the auroral beams that stream from zenith
 to the sea,
Where dies away the twilight gray and Night
 reigns full and free.
The yellow moonlight’s misty glow gilds all the
 scene around,
Her jeweled rays fall now ablaze the hills — the
 Night is crowned
With her own queenly diadem; the bright, au-
 roral light
Is Splendor’s gorgeous setting for the sable cloak
 of Night.
In thy mind’s eye canst not descry the picture as
 I call:
The Queen of Night, the crown of light, the sable
 cloak, and all? ”

The night’s own splendor dazzled him. His
 sleepy eye he rolled.
“ Doggone them sun dogs! ” then he said.
 “ They’re alwus bringin’ cold! ”

Song

Not the mysterious music of the heights,
The grandeur of harmony whose eagling flights
Wing us to clouds dim, distant, dark, and dull.
Give us the simple songs that, free and full,
Find echo in our hearts, as when we lift
The lattice, that through all the house may drift
The red-robed robin’s twittering song, that wings
Its flight by the vined window as it sings.

Life, Love, and Death

Living and loving and dying,
Life is complete in the three.
Smiling or sobbing or sighing,
Which is for you or for me?
Hoping and struggling and striving,
Dreaming success by and by;
But whether we're driven or driving,
We live and we love and we die.

Aiming and hitting and missing,
Life is complete in the three.
The fickle world praising or hissing,
Which is for you or for me?
Striding or limping or creeping,
Time drives us heartlessly by;
Meeting and parting and weeping,
We live and we love and we die.

Yearning, rejoicing, and mourning,
Life is complete in the three.
Sackcloth or garland adorning,
Which is for you or for me?
The web of our little day, stretched,
Meshes a sob or a sigh;
Joyful or joyless or wretched,
We live and we love and we die.

Wishing and fearing and fretting,
Life is complete in the three.
The world's remembrance or forgetting,
Which is for you or for me?
Gnarled and knotted and tangled
The skeins of our little lives lie;
Mud-spattered or jewel-bespangled,
We live and we love and we die.

Winter

Grieve ye not. The flowers are not dead,
Their beauty fades but for a little while.
Grieve ye not. The leafless branches spread,
The Mother, Spring, shall waken with her
smile.

Grieve ye not. Tho' still the fettered lake,
Ice-locked and silent, voiceless, cold, and gray.
The Spring again its melody shall wake,
And all its waves shall whisper to the day.

Grieve ye not. If from the sea and sky
From earth and air a whisper wings to thee,
And tells thee thou asleep in Death shalt lie,
Spring smiles and teaches thee Eternity.

The Cynic's Friends

Friends are but bubbles in a bowl,
Mere empty things, devoid of soul,
Reflecting but what shines upon;
A puff of wind and — pish! They're gone.

Now see! So carefully I've wrought
To raise and fashion one from naught.
A passing gust! A zephyr veers!
My bubble bursts and disappears.

I sit and gaze at one I've made
Reflecting gems of light and shade,
When, lo, it bursts! The friendship flies
And leaves but soap dust in my eyes.

So thick they cluster, bright they shine,
So delicate, clear-hued, and fine,
So fair, so fine — to look upon,
But brush so lightly — puff! They're gone!

An Up-Country Feud

I ain't on good terms 'ith Wilson; he ain't on
good terms 'ith me.
Neighbored fer nigh onto ten years, friendly as
friendly could be,
An' then fell out over a horse trade, crooked as
ever you see.

Wilson, he owned a big ches'nut trotter — a
spankin' fine horse.
Used to go splittin' th' breezes 'long of a quar-
ter-mile course,
Fine lookin' animal, Stranger; plenty o' gimp,
speed, and force.

I had a pacer could go *some*; bright bay, almost
a blood-red,
Nobby an' stylish fer light work, groomed to
a shine, an' well fed,
But a durn nasty habit o' balkin', when th' notion
got into her head.

Wilson druv over one mornin'; sez t' me, sez
he: "Say, Win,
Wisht y'd come 'long 'ith yer stop-watch, held
fer a quarter-mile spin."
Had th' big ches'nut hitched up t' a road-cart an',
sez he: "Jump in!"

Say! He showed speed fer that quarter! Fast
as I ever see made!

“Wilson,” sez I, “he’s a winner; puts my bay
horse in th’ shade.”

He sez to me, sez he: “Winston, how’d y’ con-
sider a trade?”

“I ain’t a fast-horse man, Winston; I ain’t jes’
nachelly fit

T’ own sech a stepper as this is; that is th’ reason
of it.”

He talked so almighty hones’ I thought that he
was — an’ I bit!

Seemed like a sin when I guv him some cash an’
that balky ol’ bay;

Sort o’ like robbin’ th’ feller — giving him
swamp-grass fer hay;

But tradin’ of horses is tradin’ — an’ that’s about
all there’s t’ say.

It happened in county-fair season; I druv over
there th’ same day,

Entered my horse in th’ races, chucklin’ th’ whole
of th’ way,

An’ found when I got there that Wilson had en-
tered th’ race ’ith my bay.

He grinned when he see me a-comin’ a-drivin’
his ches’nut, an’ I

Fer th’ life o’ me couldn’t help laughin’ t’ think
o’ th’ fun, by an’ by,

When he druv that ol’ bay in th’ races an’ found
out her weakness! My, my!

Nex' day when th' free-for-all started, my ches'-
nut shot into fust place,
Went t' th' quarter like lightnin' — th' wa'n't
nothin' else in th' race,
Went at a two minute clip, sir, but couldn't stand
up t' th' pace.

Fer when we got up t' th' quarter, my ches'nut
went down on his knees,
Gaspin' fer breath ev'ry minute, with an on-
healthy sort of a sneeze.
Wind-broken! Yes, sir, by thunder! Had a
regular wind-broken wheeze!

Mad! I was mad as a hatter! Mad till I jes'
couldn't talk.
But I looked down th' track at th' starters, an'
there stood th' bay at a balk,
While a crow-bait from down in th' country was
winnin' th' race in a walk.

I ain't on good terms 'ith Wilson; he ain't 'ith
me, as y' see.
Neighbored fer nigh onto ten years, friendly as
friendly could be.
He says I done *him* dirt in a horse trade; I say
that *he* done it t' *me*.

Miss Tabby Tattle Reads the Weekly Paper

“ So Lidy Thomas wants a girl f'r housework!
Well, I do declare
That woman never keeps one more'n two weeks!
Somethin' wrong up there!
I heerd her las' girl tellin' how she didn't git
enough to eat,
But that was only servants' talk — sech gossip
as I won't repeat!
An' Lucy Brown is gone to teachin' music down
at Bridger's Dell
An' quit the church as organist! Well, I allow
it's just as well,
From what I've heerd about her bein' mighty
sweet on Parson Brooks;
An' him a married man! I say there's danger in
too much good looks!

“ Joe Gudger's married! Well, I vow if sech
rapscallious folks as him
Can find a partner f'r their joys my chances ain't
so mighty slim!
Close! Why, his first wife's sister says she'll
swear it with her dyin' breath
Joe Gudger was so stingy that his first wife sim-
ply starved to death!
Another party up at Blake's! My, how some
folks can put on airs
An' snub their betters puzzles me! Why, Toby
Toser's clerk declares
They owe f'r three months' groceries — they
never pay and never will;
An' Toby's wore a pair o' shoes out goin' up to
git th' bill!

“Jane Hitchcock an’ that gawky Burns hev gone
an’ married! Well, I do
Declare it’s time he popped to her if ever he in-
tended to!
He’s been her stiddy beau eight years an’ but f’r
Jim Burns I allow
She might ’a’ been a happy wife an’ had a family
by now!
An’ Ezry Cowles ’s got th’ grip! Well, if it cost
a cent t’ git
Y’ can mark down that Ezry Cowles ’d be a long
time gittin’ it!
There’s only one thing that would tempt that man
t’ quit this life o’ sin,
An’ that would be a cut-rate sale on coffins, with
a hearse throwed in.

“Lem Wilson’s addin’ to his house! I wonder
where poor Lem’ll git
Th’ cash. Ain’t got th’ mor’gage paid he had to
put on t’other, yit.
Now that’s what comes fr’m weddin’ style; Lem
was a thrifty, savin’ soul
Until he married that Sue Clay, an’ she’s just
goin’ through him whole!
Tod White is dead. Poor Tod! His chance o’
reachin’ Heaven ’s mighty slim.
But bein’ as he’s dead I won’t be one to say no
bad of him.
Th’ paper’s sort o’ runnin’ down, at least accord-
in’ to my views;
I don’t know as I ever see th’ Weekly with so
little news.”

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The Lovable Lass of the Grouchy Old Man

A grouchy and crotchety, fussy old man,
Whose stick on the walk beats a rat-a-tat-tat,
The cut of his coat on an old-fashioned plan,
A shiny red nose and a worn beaver hat.
A blare of defiance, he trumpets his nose,
He clears his hoarse throat with a he-he-he-
hem!
But the girl on his arm, she's as fair as a rose,
How grew such a flower on such a gnarled
stem?

He bushes his eyebrows and scowls upon me,
His stick with a click beats the walk as we pass,
His scowl wastes the bloom of a smile that I see
And freezes it stiff on the lips of the lass.
He raises his hat with a Chesterfield air,
The sweep of his arm is chill courtesy's sign;
But his eyes pass me by with an unseeing stare.
If blood were for spilling, he'd dabble in mine.

There's pride in the white crest, uplifted so high,
Defiant the tilt of the old beaver hat.
Contempt in the stare of the unknowing eye,
And the click of his stick with its rat-a-tat-tat.
He spurns me, he scorns me, he hates me, — he
knows
I'm nursing in secret some pilfering plan
To pluck from its parental arbor the rose
That rests on the arm of this fussy old man.

So he passes me by with an unseeing stare,
His cane beats defiantly rat-a-tat-tat.
He trumpets his nose with a furious blare,
There's pride in the tilt of his worn beaver
hat.

Love may laugh at locksmiths, nor hazard a care
In bridging most gulfs of despair with a span,
But Love needs more courage than mine has, I
swear,
To laugh at this crotchety, fussy old man.

A Criticism

A damsel stood upon the stage,
A stage-worn damsel she.
A critic sat and heard her sing,
A world-worn critic he.

"I'm saddest when I sing," she sang,
A tear stood in her eye.
He sighed, the wretch, and murmured to
Himself: "And so am I."

"I cannot sing the old songs,"
She sang. Sighed he — "'Tis true,
Two kinds of songs you cannot sing,
The old ones — and the new."

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
I'd give my eyes," he hears.
"And I," he murmured, "had you them,
Would give away my ears."

"Had I the wings of any dove,"
She sang, "I would rejoice."
He muttered: "You could make them from
The feathers in your voice."

Perseverance

Says he to me, says he, one night,
A-shiverin' with mortal fright,
An' twistin' of his handkerchief,
A-tremblin', shakin' like a leaf,

Says he to me, says he:
"Maria," sort o' halted then,
An' coughed, an' then began again,
"Maria, I've got somethin' here
That for as much as 'leven year
I've tried t' say t' ye."

My! My! My heart jes' beat an' beat,
When he come up an' took his seat
Right nex' t' me an' took my hand,
An' when he squeezed it — Oh, my land!

I was jes' all unstrung.
So then I says to him, says I
To him, says I: "What is it, Si?"
An' I jes' set an' set an' set
An' sort o' fearful like, an' yet
So glad he'd found his tongue.

An' then he says to me, says he,
A-sort o' sof' an' tremblin'ly,
"Maria" — an' I set an' set,
A-wonderin' if he'd never get

Aroun' t' any more.
'N then I says to him, says I
To him, I says: "What is it, Si?
I b'lieve you were addressin' me?"
An' Si he set there silently,
As bad off as before.

An' then I says to him, says I,
"A lovely evenin', ain't it, Si?
Jes' seems to sort o' lift ye 'bove
Yerself an' make ye think o' love."

My! I was gettin' bold!
An' Si, he got so mortal 'fraid,
I thought he'd run, but, no, he staid,
An' then he says: "My hens they lay
Nigh fifteen dozen eggs today."

An' that was all he told.

My! My! My blood run hot an' cold,
T' think that he could sit an' hold
My hand, an' be so mortal 'fraid
He'd talk 'bout eggs his hens had laid.

So then I says, says I,
"If that is what ye've tried to tell
For 'leven years, ye've told it well."
An' Si, he says: "How could ye say
That, when them eggs only today
Was laid. 'Taint that," says Si.

So there we set an' set an' set
Till I jes' got so desperate
My nerves was all a-flutterin'
To see him set a-stutterin'

An' me in sech suspense.
An' then I says to him, says I,
"Was it somethin' about me, Si?"
An' he said: "Yep! — I wonder how
That everlastin' brindle cow
Broke through my pasture fence?"

An' then I says, an' sort o' slow:
"Si, was that 'leven years ago,
An' hev ye been so mortal 'fraid
To tell me that before?" I said,
Somewhat sarcastic'ly.

An' Si, he says: "Why, course it wa'n't,
I jes' chanced to be thinkin' on't,
An' wonderin' how that critter got
Through that fence, when them posts was sot
So tarnal deep," says he.

My goodness me! I never see
A man need help so much as he,
But I kep' patient, an' says I:
"Is it somethin' ye're wantin', Si?"

An' he says: "Yep. It be!"
I knew my chance was mighty slim
If I sh'd set an' wait for him,
An' so I jes' cast all aside
My nat'ral modesty an' pride,
An' says: "Si, was it me?"

Well, say! If ye could see Si throw
His arms 'bout me! "How did ye know?"
Says he. An' then he says to me —
Oh, jes' as sweet an' lovin'ly,
With sech a happy smile:
"Maria, jes' as sure as fate,
I knew that if I'd only wait,
No odds how many times I'd flunk,
Thet some time I'd jes' get up spunk
To tell ye after while."

A Vision of the Little Country Town

He sits there at the fireside, where the mellow
light is gleaming
O'er the columns of the little country paper
that he holds,
And something he has read there seems to set
his fancy dreaming,
While memory's panorama of forgotten days
unfolds.
Its quaint and homely phrases all incline him to
reflection;
Some sweetness of enchantment as he lays the
paper down
Strips the bitter peel of sorrow from the fruit of
recollection,
He tastes the mellow sweetness of the little
country town.

He sees, at even, a cottage where the lamplight's
dimly straying
Through the window, thickly bowered with the
honeysuckle vine;
To his ears come strains of music — there's a
sound of someone playing
On a little cottage organ and the notes of Auld
Lang Syne.
He hears the tea things clatter, sees a woman's
figure flitting
Here and there, belike some fairy, and the
shimmer of her gown;
And longing leads his fancy to the place where
he is sitting
Just across from her at table in the little coun-
try town.

What spell lies on its columns? There rise lusty
tones and laughing,
A rioting of young folks through the open
parlor door,
The place resounds with revelry and badinage
and chaffing;
Someone has brought his fiddle from the little
country store.
The merry songs from lad and lass in lusty tones
are swelling,
The sparkling cider passes in the earthen jug
and brown;
What silver-throated eloquence of memory is
telling
The story of the glory of the little country
town?

Yet he sits here alone, where all the dreamy
shadows dancing,
And silent, save for voices that his memory
may hear;
The eyes that o'er the columns of the little paper
glancing,
Like violets, dew-misted, in the passing of a
tear.
For some, as he, are missing from the circle once
unbroken,
And one he knows lies sleeping where the au-
tumn leaves are brown;
His hair is white, like silver, yet in fancy he has
spoken
With all those lads and lasses of the little
country town.

The misty eye of sorrow at the bush of dreams
is seeking
The rose of recollection with the fragrance of
its morn,

And in the ear of memory the voice of grief is speaking —

The hand that plucks the blossom knows the sharpness of the thorn.

His dreams die with the embers at the fireplace — ah, the pity!

The paper falls from listless hands and idly flutters down.

How lonely, lonely, lonely is the sullen, smoky city,

When the heart has come from straying in the little country town!

From the Court Records

Young Silas Watkins stole a ham — a theft most reprehensible,

And then engaged a counselor (which certainly was sensible).

They plunged him in a dungeon deep, a dungeon grim and terrifying,

The while his lawyer went to court upon a mission errorful.

And when he found at once the whole proceeding could be “busted,” he

Sued out a habeas corpus and took Silas out of custody.

In court his learned counsel urged with dignified suavity

The dangers of unseemly haste in matters of such gravity.

The prosecution’s bitterness he held unjustifiable,
“’Tis Justice, with her blinded eyes, before whom we are triable!”

And after hours of argument, with growing heat
and frictional,
He took a change of venue on a question juris-
dictional.

Whereat the counsel got a stay of trial for a year
or two,
To find a missing witness (who was dead, I have
a fear or two).
The years rolled on, they tried him, and unmer-
cifully depicted him
The commonest of larcenists; the jury then con-
victed him.
“ No chance for Silas ! ” cried his lawyer. “ Yes,
I say, indeed he has ! ”
Upon the which he went to court and got a super-
sedeas.

“ Good cheer ! ” said he to Silas. “ You will
soon be on your feet again.”
While Silas gave a bail bond and was straight-
way on the street again.
A monstrous abstract then they filed, the lawyer
made a noise and fuss,
Until, within a year or two, the court gave them
a syllabus,
Which, stripped of all its verbiage and law and
technicality,
But reaffirmed the verdict based on Silas’ proved
rascality.

“ Odds blood ! ” cried Silas’ counsel to his client,
“ When I’ve read you this,
You’ll see the entire finding simply reeks with
flaws and prejudice.
To jail shall any citizen for stealing of a hock be
sent ? ”

Straightway the which he went to court and
filed another document.

“ No sheriff shall arrest him, sir, on any legal
sham as grim

As this, and if a sheriff tries, I'll certainly man-
damus him ! ”

Again upon the solemn court, with masterful
urbanity,

He urged a close inquiry by an expert on in-
sanity,

Who felt the bumps on Silas' head, who found
profound rascality,

Who in a year made his report of “ obvious nor-
mality.”

Long Silas' counsel studied it, by methods not
revealable,

And finally concluded the decision was appeal-
able.

Good Silas gave another bond to stay his jail
processional ;

Good Silas' counsel labored with an ardor quite
professional,

Until he got an order from the highest court
available,

“ (That, as the statutes read, there was a ques-
tion if 'twasailable,)

The court below should try again, and though
they might acquit it, or

Convict it, they must try again ” — so stated the
remittitur !

The witnesses, those gray old men, recalled the
ancient history

Of Silas' crime with halting speech, and deep
and dark the mystery

To them of why they were recalled; with quaver-
ing tones, in truthfulness
They told again the old, old tale of Silas' erring
youthfulness.
The jurors held he could not change his spots,
but like the leopard he;
So Silas' counsel straightway held he had been
twice in jeopardy.

Alas! So intricate a case, with all the points in-
volvable!
When Death took Silas and to dust found him
to be resolvable.
Took him for reasons, good, perhaps, but which
were not revealable,
And Silas' counsel found, alack, the judgment
not appealable!
But back to court he strode when sure that
Charon o'er had ferried him,
And cried: "I want a nol. pros. for my client —
we have buried him!"

Don' Want to Stay

Jes' don' seem I want to stay
Sence she went away.
Jes' don' seem as if I care;
Everything seems bare
An' empty now, an' so I say
Jes' don' seem I want to stay.

Sun shines, bird songs in th' air,
Jes' don' seem I care.
All th' music o' th' spring
Don' seem anything.

Used to love it, but today
Jes' don' seem I want to stay.

Walkin' roun' th' field today,
Don' look th' same way;
Cattle lowin', crop to spare,
Jes' seems I don' care.
Scent o' flowers an' new cut hay, —
Jes' don' seem I want to stay.

Used to like to hear th' breeze
Rustlin' through th' trees;
Thought th' grass a-growin' green
Prettiest thing I seen.
All changed sence she went away,
Jes' don' seem to want to stay.

Dropping Pebbles in the Stream

Drop a pebble in the water — jes' a splash an'
it is gone,
But th's half a hundred ripples circlin' on, an'
on, an' on,
Spreadin', spreadin' from the center, flowin' on
out to the sea,
An' th' ain't no way o' tellin' where th' end is
goin' to be.
Drop a pebble in the water — in a minute ye for-
get,
But th's little waves a-flowin' an' th's ripples cir-
clin' yet;
All th' ripples flowin', flowin', to a mighty wave
hev grown,
An' ye've disturbed a mighty river — jes' by
droppin' in a stone.

Drop an unkind word or careless — in a minute
it is gone,
But th's half a hundred ripples circlin' on, an' on,
an' on.
Th' keep spreadin', spreadin', spreadin' from th'
center as th' go,
An' th' ain't no way to stop 'em, once ye've
started 'em to flow.
Drop an unkind word or careless — in a minute
ye forget,
But th's little waves a-flowin' an' th's ripples cir-
clin' yet;
An' perhaps in some sad heart a mighty wave of
tears ye've stirred,
An' disturbed a life 'et's happy when ye dropped
an unkind word.

Drop a word o' cheer an' kindness — jes' a flash
an' it is gone,
But th's half a hundred ripples circlin' on, an'
on, an' on,
Bearin' hope an' joy an' comfort on each splash-
in', dashin' wave,
Till ye wouldn't b'lieve the volume o' th' one kind
word ye gave.
Drop a word o' cheer an' kindness — in a minute
ye forget,
But th's gladness still a-swellin' an' th's joy a-
circlin' yet;
An' ye've rolled a wave of comfort whose sweet
music can be heard
Over miles an' miles o' water — jes' by droppin'
a kind word.

Give Me Content

Give me Content, all else is vain.
Nor Power nor Majesty may gain
The prize. And yet in me are blent
All these, the while I have Content.

In Childhood Time

Hark! I hear the happy laughter that from children's voices rings,
Swelling out like some vast golden harp with half a thousand strings,
Every one vibrating grandly in an ecstatic acclaim,
In a medley of sweet melodies that set the birds to shame;
On the harp of childhood's happiness each note rings clear and true,
For the heart is pure and perfect and each quivering string is new,
And it tells and swells like bells afar that ring and rhyme and chime
The sweetest music ever told in note or tune or time.

When the heart is growing older and the harp of laughter rings,
There's a false note clashing somewhere in the swelling of the strings;
There's a chord that strikes imperfect, where some sorrow echoes through
The melody, and grief has warped the strings to strains not true.

Sometimes there's brilliant music that rings from
an empty heart,
But it's not the melodious laughter of the child,
that knows no art,
But just flows full and free, for Nature's teach-
ings, undefiled,
Make music that is heart-true in the sweet voice
of a child.

Could I gather every note that floats and rings
and swells and tells
The gladness of the child's heart, true as any
chime of bells
May tell the passing hour, and fashion them into
a song.
'Twould thrill and fill the air with melody as
though a throng
Of seraphim, as tinkling cymbals struck the
twinkling stars
In heaven's perfect music, where no din or dis-
cord mars.
And a myriad strings would mingle in a melody
sublime,
The rhyme and chime of laughter gathered from
all Childhood's Time.

The Power of Love

The thunder of Hate may be lost on the gale,
May be stilled in the storm, in the tempest may
fail,
But the whisper of Love wings unerring its way
From a star to a star, through the ages for aye.

A Human Life

A ship that throbs along in dire distress
Till lost in oceans of forgetfulness.
A tangle of sweet flowers whose petals turn
To ash of unfulfillment in an urn.

A wisp of tangled threads, whose parted ends
No deft hand joins, no endless effort mends.
A play whose fickle players merely greet
And go and leave the story incomplete.

A bud that opens brilliant at the dawn,
Flings sweet perfume a moment and is gone.
A breath between a cradle and a bier,
The blending of a smile, a sob, a tear.

A book whose pages turn with each new day,
Till Time has read the tale and cast away.
A mask worn till a passing play is done,
To cloak a wraith and hide a skeleton.

A lie, whose ghostly semblance is concealed
Till in a shroud its untruth lies revealed.
A thing that shapes the sod for a brief day
And dies and leaves its faithful slave more clay.

A story that is told ere 'tis begun,
A song that only whispers and is done;
A thing that chains the lightnings and that stirs
The deep — the elements its messengers.

Lord of the sea and sky, a ruler proud
That quakes at storms and trembles at a cloud;
That comes and goes on wings unseen — a germ
That grows to fill a grave and feed a worm.

Winter and Summer

Snow on the hilltops, drear and bleak,
Snow in the vales where the shrill winds speak
In mournful tones; but deep and deep
Down, down, beneath, the flowers sleep.

Green are the hilltops, fresh and fair,
Sweet is the breath of the scented air,
Loosed the chains of the ice-locked lake,
And the sad earth smiles and the flowers wake.

Snow on the heart that is riven and bleak,
Snow on the heart where voices speak,
Voices of grief that is deep and deep,
Yet still in the heart the flowers sleep.

A whisper of hope on the scented air,
Flown is the snow and the bleak heart fair;
Dull Grief's grim fetters break and break,
And the sad heart smiles and the flowers wake.

Where?

"Where lies the town of Happiness?"

Cried the youth to the wrinkled sage,
As they met one day on the weary way

That lies 'twixt Youth and Age.
The gray haired wise man shook his head:
"'Tis a little farther on," he said.

"Where lies the town of Happiness?"

I pray we reach it soon;"
For risen high in the molten sky
Was the sun that marked Life's noon.
But again the wise man shook his head:
"'Tis a little farther on," he said.

“Where lies the town of Happiness?”

The youth was old and gray,
With shoulders bent, and eyes intent
Where the road stretched forth, away.
The wise man sadly shook his head:
“’Tis a little farther on,” he said.

“Where lies the town of Happiness?”

Down, down in the dust he fell;
His voice was shrill and the death films fill
His eyes. Mused the sage: “’Tis well.”
And there gleamed in his eye a tear unshed:
“For me, ’tis farther on,” he said.

The Parted Threads

If he came back, I wonder would he know
The voices whispering of the long ago?
If he came back, I wonder would he see
The beauties, buried now, that used to be?
If he came back, back from the dust and dead,
I wonder would he seek the broken thread,
And follow on, o’er sod and o’er the sea,
Until it led him back to youth and me?

If he came back, I wonder would he share
My dreams? Or would the roses in my hair
Be but dull, voiceless flowers of the spring,
Speechless and silent, mute, nor whispering
The secrets once they told? Or would they glow
With the sweet memories of long ago,
Where every petal quivered with the weight
And grandeur of a rapture passionate?

If he came back, I wonder would he feel
The rapture of the hopes that used to steal
From out the tinted twilight as we stood
Beneath the boughs in the thick, leafy wood,

Thrilled with the song whose silent melody
None heard in all its ecstasy but we?
Would he now hear that whispered song and low
If he came back, who went so long ago?

Where ends the song that is yet half unsung?
In the still mound, where the green turf upflung?
Dies all the music, or but hid in air,
Trembling, yet mute, in that vast Otherwhere?
The threads now parted, who shall mend again,
Weld broken links, restore the chain? And then
When they come back, who have been gone so
long,
I wonder will they know the old, sweet song?

At the War Office

A woman poor and a peeress proud,
A dingy room and a crushing crowd,
The gloom of death and grave and shroud,
A stifled cry and a sob, aloud.

A heart has heard and an eye has read;
A soul has writhed, and a lowered head
Is bowed, and a trembling tongue has said:
“My God! My God! And he is dead!”

A wail, a sob, and a bitter cry;
An anguished tear in a woman's eye;
A 'peeress' face where agony
Is carved, and a mutely murmured “Why?”

A woman stares and a peeress starts.
Without, the din of traffic's marts
Throbs in the streets. Lie far apart
Their lives; but close, so close their hearts.

Indestructible

A wreath of roses hung upon a stone,
Above me, this alone.

A sob that floats, and falling tear on tear
Descending here.

Some soul in sorrow kneeling at the tomb,
And in the gloom,

Pouring above me to the silent air
Its deep despair.

Though cold the pulseless clay and deaf the ear,
Yet I shall hear.

Though the thick shadows endlessly shall flow,
Still shall I know.

Though from the dumb, dead tenement in flight
Wing life and light,

Yet not deserted lies the silent clay,
For Love shall stay.

Crumble the stone and in the dust shall lie,
Yet Love not die.

Through the long night when the dark shadows
creep,
Not even sleep,

But whisper from the silence of the bier:
"Lo! I am here."

The Village Church

We're off for the village church today — Mother
an' Moll an' me,
Come fr'm th' city, a hundred miles, to go, es-
pecially.
Been goin' to brownstone gospel shops, imposin'
an' **grand** an' swell.
But I don't feel that hankerin' there for heaven
or that proper fear o' hell
That I allus did in th' little church in th' village
we used to 'tend,
Where th' green woodbine an' th' ivy twine, an'
the songbirds' voices blend
With th' village choir, an' the gospel hymns rang
out on th' summer air,
An' th' Lord sort o' seemed to come right down
an' sit among us there.

Off for th' village church today — there's a tear
in Mother's eye,
An' another one in my own, I guess, but I couldn't
tell ye why;
Mebbe it's 'cause we was married there, so many
years ago.
An' our boy lies there in his grave, asleep, an'
th' music seems to flow
Out through the vine-clad window in a sort o'
lullaby,
As th' breath o' God might kiss th' sod where
the souls all sleeping lie.
Th' air's so still an' the sweet hymns fill our
hearts with peace today,
An' th' Lord sort o' seems to come right down
an' kiss our tears away.

There's a somethin' grand 'bout the village
church — I can't jes' tell ye why,
But ye seem to get right close to God, an' ye
stand there silently,
Breathin' a prayer so earnest like, yer eyes all
blurred an' dim,
As though He was standin' there an' ye was
whisperin' to Him.
An' th' little organ's mellow tones, an' th' music
seems so grand,
Because it tells a tale of love that yer heart can
understand,
An' yer heart feels warm with love that ye want
the world to know an' share,
An' th' Lord sort o' seems to come right down
and sit among us there.

I got to live in th' city, 'cause I got my int'rests
there,
But Mother an' me, when we come to die, are
both a-goin' to share
A lot in the village churchyard, where our lost
boy lies asleep;
An' though our lives is happy, sometimes we sit
an' weep,
An' sort o' yearn for th' time to come when th'
Lord's own lullaby
Floats through th' vine-clad window above us as
we lie;
When our boy shall wake and we shall take his
hand at th' Judgment day,
Rise from th' sod, in th' steps o' God — we three
— an' go away.

Contentment

Live in Today, nor count the Future's sorrow ;
Live in Today, nor dream the Future's pain ;
Live in Today, there may be no Tomorrow.

Today's delights thou mayst not know again.

Smile in Today ; whate'er the morrow brings
thee,

Smile in Today, while yet thy heart is glad ;
Be thou the songster that in gladness sings free ;
Today is bright ; Tomorrow may be sad.

Today Life's harp is tuned to notes of gladness,
Deft Happiness the sweetest notes may raise.
Tomorrow strikes its wailing strings to sadness,
And Memory only mournful music plays.

A Horse Trade

"Hello!" says I.

"Hello!" says he.

I never see the man afore.

"Swap?" says I.

"Dunno," says he.

"Mebbe, mebbe — I ain't shore."

"Th' bay?" says I.

"Th' gray?" says he.

"Swap!" says we, an' both unhitched.

"Fine horse," says I.

"O' course," says he ;

An' in a minute we had switched.

"Git up!" says I.

"Git up!" says he.

An' both them horses stood stock still !

“Balk?” says I.
“Yep!” says he.
“Mine too!” s’ I, laughin’, fit to kill.
“Say!” says I.
“Hey?” says he.
“Guess that’s horse apiece,” says we.
“Good day!” says I.
“Good day!” says he.
Best joke, b’ gosh, I ever see!

The Inexorable

Seek not to fathom Fate’s decree;
Whatever has been was to be.
Not all the sighs of Time could stay
The heavy hand she seeks to lay;
Not all the tears of all the years
Could blot one page from yesterday.

Seek not to see beyond the cloud,
To fathom depths beneath the shroud;
Thy little knowledge soars in vain,
To beat its wings in dust again.
It is thy doom to dwell in gloom
Till Death shall see thee rest or reign.

Thou canst alone hope some wise plan
Pervades the destiny of man;
That purposes divine are blent
With what seems chance or accident.
That out afar, the falling star
Sees purpose to its mission bent.

Thou art a prisoner here, alone,
And helpless as the sod or stone;

Small as on greatness lay'st thou stress,
Great as thou know'st thy littleness.
A child of Chance and Circumstance,
God's infant in thy helplessness.

The Mortgaged Farm

Goin', goin', goin' — gone! Mother, dear, don't
cry;
Th' old home's passed t' other hands, but mebbe,
by an' by,
We may save an' buy another, though no place'll
ever be
As dear as this one that we've lost has been t'
you an' me.
Goin', goin', goin' — gone! Mother, come away;
Th' ol' farm's been knocked down an' sold — it
does no good t' stay;
We've tried our best t' save it, but it wasn't or-
dered so.
It ain't our home no longer — Mother, dear, le's
go!

I don't know as I ever see th' ol' farm look so
fine.
Never see a deeper green on every shrub an'
vine;
Clover blossoms never smelled so fresh an' sweet,
somehow,
Lilacs never grew so thick, it seems, as th' do
now.
The ol' white house with its green blinds, the
woodbine creepin' on,
'Twon't do no harm, I guess, t' take a las' look
'fore we're gone.

Tried our best t' pay th' debt, we did, th' Lord
mus' know,
But somehow couldn't make it quite — Mother,
dear, le's go.

Goin', goin', goin' — gone! I seem t' hear it yet;
Seem t' hear the auctioneer — my eyes somehow
get wet;

Gone t' pay th' mor'gagee, an' we are crowded
out.

Gone! So many things are gone that folks don't
think about.

Every blade o' grass an' tree, every foot o' ground
Has some hauntin' memory, some sweetness
clingin' 'round,

Some memory for you an' me, that other folks
don't know;

It seems somehow the're speakin' now — Mother,
dear, le's go.

Goin', gone! We couldn't save it, Mother, dear;
we tried,

But everything went criss-cross — th' cows took
sick an' died,

We had to sell th' horses — th' farmin' didn't
pay,

An' troubles sort o' double-quickened — sometimes
the' come that way.

Goin', gone! The pasture lands; th' dairy house
beside

Th' brook; the first house that we built, where
Sue and Johnny died.

T' other folks it's simply losin' of a bit o' land,
But the's a loss t' you an' me that they can't un-
derstand.

Goin', goin', goin' — gone! I wonder what's th'
use
Twinin' heartstrings 'round an' 'round jes' t'
tear 'em loose.
Goin', gone! Th' way o' life; why, th' good Lord
knows;
Buildin' up for years an' years, an' then away she
goes!
Hopes or homes, it's jes' th' same — what we
build about,
Other hands mus' reap th' fruits an' we are
crowded out;
Story always jes' th' same, fr'm th' light o' dawn
T' th' twilight's mist an' shade — hopes goin',
goin', gone.

A Good Deed Done

I know one deed in kindness done
More glory brings, more fame has won,
Than countless good we would have wrought
To all the world — if we had thought.

'Nough for Me

Sometimes I think I'll thrash him, good,
He needs it bad, I'm sure;
An' sometimes — well, I b'lieve I would,
'N then I can't endure
T' tech th' 'musin' little kid,
For when he smiles, y' see,
He looks jes' like his mother did,
An' that's enough for me.

I guess a hundred times or more
I've taken him inside
Th' bedroom there, an' closed th' door
An' tried an' tried an' tried
T' bring myself to strike him, once,
Jes' once — an' then I see
His mother's smile on his wet face,
An' that's enough for me.

First thing I know I'm sittin' there
Pettin' th' little chap,
An' strokin' of his curly hair,
Holdin' him in my lap,
An' dreamin' of her — seein' her
Jes' as she used to be,
An' somethin' makes my eyes t' blur,
An' me cry silently.

He's got the same brown eyes she had,
An' the same silky hair;
Looks so like her, th' little lad,
That — well, I jes' don' dare
To lay a finger rough on him;
'T 'd almos' seem as though
I was a-bein' harsh to her,
An' so I let him go.

He ain't a bad boy — no, he ain't,
Jes' mischievous, that's all.
In all his makeup th' ain't a taint
O' meanness — an' I call
T' mind when things she used to do
Exactly like he does,
I thought was jes' th' cutest an'
Th' dearest ever was.

Y' know sometimes he'll come t' me,
 An' say to me: " Say, Dad,
Y' ain't goin' t' whip me, now, are ye?
 I ain't been very bad."
An' then he'll twist, an' sort o' smile;
 My eyes get blurred and dim:
Th' ain't enough gold in th' world
 T' hire me t' tech him.

Folks say I'm spoilin' him; may be
 I am, but I don't dare
T' tech him rough — he looks like she
 Did, an' so I don't care.
He puts his little arms aroun'
 My neck, an' I can see
Her in his eyes, so big an' brown,
 An' that's enough for me.

Taps

Lights out! and darkness brooding deep around
Thee, soldier; not the trembling bugle's sound
Nor volley thrice repeated o'er the mound
 Shall waken thee.
Lights out! Not where the flag of battle flies,
Nor here, where the sad, silent shadow lies,
Shall drumbeat call or bugle bid thee rise,
 But silently,
Thy duty done, thou sleepest. Rest thee well;
Nor any rude alarm shall strike and swell
To rouse thee — Glory stands thy sentinel.
 Good night to thee!

Song of Endeavor

'Tis not by wishing that we gain the prize,
Nor yet by ruing,
But, from our fallings, learning how to rise,
And tireless doing.

The idols broken, not our tears and sighs
May yet restore them.
Regret is only food for fools; the wise
Look but before them.

Nor ever yet Success was wooed with tears;
To notes of gladness
Alone the fickle goddess turns her ears,
She hears not sadness.

The heart thrives not in the dull rain and mist
Of gloomy pining.
The sweetest flowers are the flowers sun-kissed,
Where glad light shining.

Look not behind thee; there is only dust
And vain regretting.
The lost tide ebbs; in the next flood thou must
Learn, by forgetting.

For the lost chances be ye not distressed
To endless weeping;
Be not the thrush that o'er the empty nest
Is vigil keeping.

But in new efforts our regrets today
To stillness whiling,
Let us in some pure purpose find the way
To future smiling.

Out Over There

I see the transport's here at last; the soldier boys
have come.

I hear the bugles brayin' an' the beatin' o' the
drum;

I can see the flags a-flyin' and the bands begin to
play,

An' it seems to me they sailed from Frisco only
yesterday.

I'd like to join the shoutin', but I couldn't cheer
a note;

There's a lump that's always risin' and a-chokin'
in my throat.

They're marchin' down the street by twos; I'm
watchin' every pair,

But I know my boy ain't with 'em — they have
left him over there.

I know a fellow ought to try to put aside his
tears,

An' he ought to join the shoutin' an' the ringin',
rousin' cheers.

But say! It's hard to stand here an' to see 'em
marchin' on,

An' to know that my boy's missin' from them
marchin' ranks, an' gone.

Say, if I could only see him, with his head erect
an' high,

An' if he could know I was a-watchin' of him
passin' by!

An' know that in that cheerin' he was gettin' of
his share!

But he can't — the Lord saw fit to muster him
out over there.

There's so many, Lord, so many; an' my boy was
all I had,

An' it seems you might 'a' left him to his poor
old lovin' Dad.

His mother died so long ago; he never knew her
face,

An' Daddy's breast in childhood was his only
restin' place.

An' when the call for volunteers was made, he
come to me,

An' he pleaded to go with 'em, an' he begged so
earnestly,

An' I says: "He's all I've got, Lord, an' I know
you'll surely spare

My boy, an' let him come back." An' he's lyin'
over there.

An' I thought to go to Frisco, an' to greet him
when he come;

An' to stay till he was mustered out, an' then to
bring him home.

An' so I'm here to see the boys, — to hear the
shouts an' cheers;

A poor old father watchin' 'em through eyes
that's blurred with tears.

I know he's not among 'em, but it sort o' seems
to me,

That he can't be lyin' out there dead, across the
sobbin' sea.

There's so many boys, so many, that the Lord
was good to spare,

That I can't believe my boy is in his grave out
over there.

Look Up

Each little day
That slips away
And finds for thee no pleasure,
That steals along
Without a song,
Is just a wasted treasure.

The sands that pass
Through the hour glass
And find thee in repining,
Mark the lost hours.
The freshest flowers
Blow when the sun is shining.

Thou shalt not grope
For the lost hope
Through darkness dim, unending.
Ne'er vain regret
Succeeded yet
A broken thread in mending.

The chance that's lost,
Let not the cost
Be flowing tears and sighing,
When countless more
From life's vast store
Are to be had for trying.

So put away
Thy cares today,
And cease thy fate reviling;
For Chance eludes
The soul that broods,
And courts the soul that's smiling.

The Dead

Some sleep under the sighing pine,
And some sleep under the snow;
Some where flowers toss and twine,
And some where oceans flow.
Some where the glacier growls and grinds,
And some 'neath the cool, green sod;
But all sleep the same sleep, and waking finds
Each one in the arms of God.

Writing a Letter Home

He wrote home: "Mother, dear, I have
A place that will not fail.
I'm working for the Commonwealth."
('Twas true — he was in jail.)

"I board and lodge at my employer's
House." ('Twas so, you see.)

"I have a private room, that has
Been set apart for me.

"My habits are quite regular.
I do each bidden task.

My food"—('Twas bread and water, lone;)
"Is all that I can ask.

"I'm held above my fellow men
And my companions here."
(He was the only prisoner
Kept in the upper tier.)

"I had some hope that I might come
To see you Christmas Day;
But as it is, I do not see
How I can get away.

“ I am to make a journey soon,”
 (He was condemned, you know,
For murder,) “ but I cannot say
 Yet, just where I will go.”

The sheriff wrote, after 'twas done:
 “ Your son died suddenly.
'Twas just this morning he dropped off ” —
 (The gallows, don't you see.)

“ Your son stood high among us here,”
 (The gallows was quite tall.)
“ And hundreds gathered at the last ” —
 (They did — to see him fall.)

The dear old lady read the news,
 And said, wiping her eye:
“ Ah, well — since he must be cut down,
 I'm glad he stood so high.”

The Cup Will Pass

The cup will pass,
 How bitter may it be;
Though thou mayst drain
 Its deepest dreg and lee,
A sweeter wine
 Some day will brim the glass,
The draught be thine;
 The bitter cup will pass.

Stubbed His Toe

Did ye ever pass a youngster 'et 'd been an'
stubbed his toe,
An' was cryin' by the roadside sort o' quiet like
an' slow;
A-holdin' of his dusty foot, all hard an' brown
an' bare,
An' tryin' to keep fr'm his eyes th' tears that's
gatherin' there?
Ye hear him sort o' sobbin' like, an' snufflin' of
his nose,
Ye stop an' pat his head an' some way try t' ease
his woes;
Ye treat him sort o' kind like, an' th' fust thing
that y' know,
He's up an' off an' smilin' — clean forgot he
stubbed his toe.

'Long th' road o' human life ye see a fellow trav-
elin' slow,
An' like as not ye'll find he's some poor chap
that's stubbed his toe.
He was makin' swimmin' headway, but he
bumped into a stone,
An' his friends kep' hurryin' onward an' they
left him here alone.
He ain't sobbin' er ain't snifflin' — he's too old
for tears an' cries,
But he's grievin' jes' as earnest, ef it only comes
in sighs;
An' it does a heap o' good, sometimes, to go a
little slow,
To say a word o' comfort to th' man that's
stubbed his toe.

Ye're never sure yerself, an' th' ain't no earthly
way t' know
Jes' when it's goin' t' come yer time t' trip an'
stub yer toe;
Today ye're smilin', happy, in th' bright sun's
heat an' glow,
Tomorrow ye're a' shiverin' as ye're trudgin'
through th' snow.
Jes' when ye think ye got th' world th' fastest in
yer grip
Is th' very time, ye'll find, et ye're th' likeliest t'
slip;
'N' it's mighty comfortin' t' have some fellow
stop, I know,
An' speak t' ye an' kind o' help ye when ye've
stubbed yer toe.

Forgetfulness

Today, bestrewn the troubled way
With fears, as saints we kneel to pray.
The way tomorrow unbeset,
Self-proud we rise — and we forget.

An Art Criticism

A ragged kid in a torn straw hat,
With his hair stuck through, an' a sassy smile,
An' one suspender 'crost, like that —
Wal — it may be art, but it ain't my style.
Diggin' th' sand with his bare big toe,
An' a big loose patch sewed to his knee;
Shovin' his hands in his pockets — so;
Why they call that art, dogged ef I see.

Why, th' little runt 'et's painted there,
With his eyes half closed, an' winkin' down,
Th' sassy little rat, I swear
I've seen him, right in my own town.

Them funny freckles, big an' brown,
'N' them ragged pants an' that torn straw hat—
I bet I kin find, right in our town,
A dozen kids 'et look like that.

Why, sho! I've caught more kids like that
In th' limbs o' my own apple tree,
Lookin' out under that ol' straw hat,
An' winkin' sassy down at me.

Th' little scamp! I kin almost hear
Him say: "Hev an apple, Dad," an' throw
One down an' ketch me on th' ear!
Why they call that art, dogged ef I know.

An' th' goldarned thing! A city chap
Come along an' paid five hundred cold
Fer it, an' thought he had a snap.
I had t' laugh 't how he got sold.

A ragged kid in a torn straw hat,
Like I've seen a hundred times, I bet;
An' payin' out that much fer that!
B' gosh, th' fools ain't all dead yet!"

The Archer's Shaft

A feathered arrow to his bow
The archer Hatred fitted taut,
Drew tight the bowstring, kneeling low,
And forth a venomed message shot.

So full his quiver he forgot,
Ere died the twang of his bowstring,
The poisoned shaft that forth he shot,
The venomed message set a-wing.

Until, as through the wood he sped
Another day, he found it where
A heart, fell stricken, lying dead,
The shaft had pierced and quivered there.

Friends

The's a little touch o' winter in th' air,
The's leaves a-droppin', droppin' everywhere,
The's gusts o' snow a-blowin',
But the's evergreen a-growin',
Lookin' fresher 'n brighter 'n ever,
Jes' to show 'et th' ain't never
Any time when all th' trees is stripped an' bare.

The's a little touch o' trouble in th' air,
The's friends a-droppin', droppin' everywhere,
But the's some 'et's clingin' faster,
Even when ye've met disaster,
Jes' to show 'et th' ain't ever
Any trouble 'et can sever
Friends 'et's evergreen — th' kind o' friends 'et's
rare.

Vanities

“Give me Fame,” cried the genius.
The wizard’s smile was grim;
His arm stretched forth and a tasteless fruit
Plucked from a rotten limb.
“I seek, sir, Fame,” cried the genius,
“Ye have given me instead
A rotten fruit.” The wizard spoke:
“This is Fame,” he said.

“Give me Power,” cried the monarch.
The wizard smiled again.
A crown of thorns he gave to him
And a sword with a bloody stain.
“But I seek Power,” cried the monarch,
“What have ye given instead?”
The wizard spoke: “I tell thee, Sire,
These are Power,” he said.

“Give me Love,” cried the maiden.
The wizard sadly smiled;
A bleeding heart he gave to her,
And the form of a cold, dead child.
“I asked for Love,” mused the maiden,
“Ye have given me Grief instead.”
The wizard sighed and softly spoke:
“Love is Grief,” he said.

“Give me Peace,” cried a weary soul.
The wizard laughed aloud,
Drew forth from his store of treasure
And gave to him a shroud.
“I asked for Peace,” he shuddered,
“Ye give me Death, instead.”
The wizard mused. “I tell thee
That this is Peace,” he said.

The Lost Heart

Back among the trees and trellises, along the
leaf-strewn lane,
Sitting on the bank of the mill stream and dream-
ing dreams again,
Drinking water sweet as nectar from the bucket
at the well,
In the orchard's leaf and silence, watching wind-
falls as they fell,
Trying here, at five and thirty, just to be a boy
again,
To recall the joys of boyhood and forget the
cares of men;
But I listen to a lesson in the twitter of the wren:
When the boy's heart turns to man's it never
throbs the same again.

Once the sun marks noon of lifetime, once the
morning steals away,
Once the shadows growing shorter and then fall
the other way,
Once the play time ends at manhood, once the
frolicking is done,
Once the face is turned from dawning to the set-
ting of the sun,
You may sit among the flowers that you plucked
and threw away,
Turn the leaves of Time all backward, try to read
them as you may,
You may kindle fires of Memory, you may sit
and watch the flame,
But there's something changed within you that
can never be the same.

You may lay aside the burden of your troubles
as you will,
But the bent and sunken shoulders tell the story
to you still ;
The story of the troubles and the trials that are
sealed
From the simple hearts of children, and to men
alone revealed.
The sorrow dulls, the sigh is stilled, the sore
hearts soothèd are,
The smarting wound is healed again, but always
leaves a scar,
The fire of youth burns only once, and dies in
its dead flame,
The simple heart of boyhood that can never be
the same.

So I sit among the trellises and trees and wonder
why :
Clear the air as in my boyhood and as blue the
unflecked sky,
Full the leaves as ever blowing, sweet the bird
songs and as free,
But the boy's heart that throbbed to them is un-
tuned and dead in me.
There's a longing, longing, longing, speaking in
a deep-drawn sigh,
For the heart that throbbed in boyhood, cloudless
as the azure sky ;
For the heart that was the sunlight and the air —
that tongue nor pen
Can ever paint or picture — that I cannot know
again.

Compensation

Had we not met we had not known these sighs,
These heartaches and these leaden-wingèd
years,

The sorrows speaking in these grief-wet eyes ;
Had we not met we had not known these tears.

And yet, had we not met, we had not known
The bliss of gladness in those other whiles,
Ere the gay-plumaged yesterday had flown.

Had we not met we had not known those
smiles.

The Unsounded Depths

The sweetest song is the unsung,
Unspoken is the kindest word,
The clearest chime the heart's unrun,
The grandest music the unheard.

Nor singer grand, nor bard with lyre,
Within his sweetest song may hold
The fullness of the flaming fire
That leaps within, but is not told.

There is a grandeur and sublime
That lingers hidden in the heart ;
That will not speak in note or rhyme,
The fire, unseen, that flames apart.

The grandest deed is that, undone,
Whose endless promptings veer and roll
But take no shape — the rayless sun
That shines unseen within the soul.

And, deed or song or rhyme or word,
That soul may stir, or heart may fill,
There is a sweeter far, unheard,
An unseen beauty, grander still.

No tongue may tell the deepest roll,
Where, all unfathomed, sweep apart
The ocean waters of the soul,
The depths unseen, within the heart.

A Parting

“Don’ go, Bill, don’ go!
I know it mus’ seem slow
Here on th’ farm fer a boy like you;
I know the’s many a chore to do;
Not much in th’ way o’ company,
’Cept what ye git from Ma an’ me;
An’ it’s temptin’ to think o’ th’ world so wide,
An’ all o’ th’ pleasures o’ life outside
Our quiet little home life here;
But, Bill, it’ll seem so hard an’ queer
Fer Ma an’ me, as we allus do,
Not to sit an’ feel so proud o’ you
When we see you ’roun’. I know it’s slow,
But, Bill, I wisht you wouldn’t go!

“Don’ go, Bill, don’ go!
Ma’s tears jes’ flow an’ flow
When she’s packin’ up yer trunk — an’ I —
Well, Bill, I ain’t much on th’ cry,
But th’ ol’ man’s heart is heavy, Bill,
The’s an achin’ there that won’t be still.
Jim’s gone, an’ though a year’s gone by,
It don’ seem right he had to die;

'Then Jack lef' home, an' Lou is wed,
An' mebbe even Jack is dead,
Fer we haven't heard a word from him.
Bill! Bill! Our flock has grown so slim,
Ye're all we've got now, Bill, an' so
I jes' can't bear to let ye go!

"What d'ye say, Bill? Ye won't go!
Boy, boy, ye'll never know
What a load ye've raised fr'm th' ol' folks' heart,
Fer we couldn't bear to see ye start.
Come, here, Bill, let me hug ye once;
Well, drat me fer a sneakin' dunce,
If my blame ol' eyes ain't filled with tears,
When I feel like whoopin' up with cheers.
An' Bill, let's go tell Mother so,
That her boy says he ain't goin' to go."

The Lost Chance

Upon the stream of Life we see
The ship of Opportunity
Cast loose from wharf and pier,
And slip to sea; alone we stand,
Forsaken in a lonely land,
Beset with fear on fear.
Across the wave we cry and call:
"Ho! Wait! Ho! Wait! Ho! Wait!"
The mocking echoes fly and fall:
"Too late! Too late! Too late!"

Horses to a Little Child

Never a care as she lies asleep,
 Dear little lassie with red-brown hair ;
Angels of Light a sweet vigil keep,
 Keep for the little one slumbering there.
Never a dream as she lies so still,
 Never a dream but of Fairyland,
Fairyland and the flowers that fill
 Her bed, and the lilies within her hand.

Never a tear as she lies at rest,
 Now or ever or evermore ;
Never a sorrow to bruise her breast,
 Ever the gladness of fairylore.
Never the rough way to bruise her feet,
 Never or ever a discord sound,
Only the murmur of music sweet,
 And the laughing of Cherubim, all around.

Never a sigh from the silent lips,
 For the dollies all carefully laid away ;
Only the music of laughter slips
 Out of the realm of the sunlit day.
Never or ever a thought or care,
 For the little hat with its flowered wreath,
Bearing a vision of red-brown hair
 Flying in tangled curls beneath.

Dead? Ah, no! She is just asleep,
 Asleep where the dreams and daisies are ;
Angels of Light a sweet vigil keep,
 Keep in the light of a twinkling star.
Asleep, and the odors of flowers fill
 Her bed, and the lilies within her hand ;
Asleep, and the whispering angels still
 Her sighs with the dreams of Fairyland.

The Difference

Sometimes when Pa gets mad because
I bust some of his household laws,
He says: "Look here, you rascal, you,
I'll whale you, sir, that's what I'll do."
An' Ma, she just turns up her nose,
An' sits there in refined repose,
An' higher still her nose she tilts:
An' Pa don't lick me — he just wilts.

When Ma gets mad because I do
Some little thing she said not to,
She don't talk loud and wild like Dad,
But just says: "Will, come here, my lad."
An' Pa don't get no chance to tilt
His nose — an' Ma, well, she don't wilt;
She just leads Willie boy away
Out to the shed and makes him lay
Acrost her lap — seems just like play,
'Cept Willie don't sit down that day.

Gladness By the Way

Let us smile along together,
Be the weather
 What it may.
Through the waste and wealth of hours,
Plucking flowers
 By the way.
Fragrance from the meadows blowing,
Naught of heat or hatred knowing,
Kindness seeking, kindness sowing,
 Not tomorrow, but today.

Let us sing along, beguiling
Grief to smiling
 In the song.
With the promises of heaven
Let us leaven
 The day long.
Gilding all the duller seemings
With the roselight of our dreamings,
Splashing clouds with sunlight's gleamings,
 Here and there and all along.

Let us live along ; the sorrow
Of tomorrow
 Never heed.
In the pages of the present
What is pleasant
 Only read.
Bells but pealing, never knelling,
Hearts with gladness ever swelling,
Tides of charity upwelling
 In our every dream and deed.

Let us hope along together,
Be the weather
 What it may,
Where the sunlight glad is shining,
Not repining
 By the way.
Seek to add our meed and measure
To the old Earth's joy and treasure,
Quaff the crystal cup of pleasure,
 Not tomorrow, but today.

Lost Opportunities

Sweet songs, half whispering to me in the solitude

Of sweeter melody they might have sung,
And phantom flowers that scent for me the leafy wood

With wraiths of the perfume they might have flung.

Sweet faces smiling dimly through the shadowy light,

Ghosts of the full perfection that had shown,
Had not the sun gone down ere it was night.

Leaving but shadows of the unfulfilled, alone.

Beneath the Snows

There are flowers of good cheer growing close
by the way

That stretches from dark to the dawn;
Full wreathed in the green leaves of smiles, so
they say,

And never or ever are gone.

The snows of misfortune deep mantling the
ground,

The blasts from the Northland grow shrill,
Beneath we may find them full blooming around,
And pluck them whenever we will.

There are ripples of laughter down deep in the
heart,

As flowers that bloom 'neath the snows;
Though fettered with ice there is water apart,
That tinkles and trills as it flows.

The breath of Misfortune may strew its hoar
frost,

The moan of the winter be chill,
The music of joy be afar but not lost,
And we may still hear, if we will.

There are songs of Delight on the wings of the
wind,

Though hoarser the tempest we hear;
Though fierce in its raging the wild storm has
dinned

Its discord of strife on the ear.
The deep diapason, the storm's sullen roar,
Shall sink to a murmur, be still;
And songs that are sweeter shall tremble once
more,

The songs we may hear, if we will.

A Lady's Letter of Regret

"Indeed, I regret that I cannot accept,"

(Oh, Lord, what a whopper was that!)

"Poor writing is weak; if I only could speak,"

(Yes, if I could speak — through my hat!)

"I feel that you'd know that it just grieves me
so."

(If I went I just know I should die.)

"For it's always a treat at your dear house to
meet!"

(Oh, yes, it's a treat — in your eye!)

"Your at-home cards enclosed found me quite
indisposed"

(To accept — but I don't write it so.)

"And I really don't dare yet to risk the night air."

(And your airs would kill me, I know!)

"I would come and right quick if I weren't so
sick"

(Of the trashy amusements you shower!)

"You dear soul, you don't know how much I'd
like to go"

(Before I'd been there half an hour!)

"I'm sure that each guest will with pleasure be
blessed."

(I'm blessed if I envy their lot!)

"I'd give anything to hear dear Clara sing!"

(How thankful I am that I'll not!)

"I know I will hear from my friends just how
dear

Was your function" (if any endure),

"And I know 'tis a fact 'twill be nice as your
tact."

(I pity it if 'tis as poor!)

The Evil of Wishing

To his young wife he said:
 " Could I
But taste again my
 Mother's pie,
I would be willing, quite,
 To die."

They rode out to the
 Farm one day,
A week or so with
 Ma to stay;
He stowed a whole
 Mince pie away.

Now that for which he
 Long had sighed
Lay like a lump of
 Lead inside
His stomach; he lay
 Down and died.

The man who craves youth's
 Pies, 'tis true,
If he would eat them and
 Not rue,
Should have his boyhood's
 Stomach, too.

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